

# Blood Pressure Medications



## Facts about Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is called the 'silent killer' because there are **no symptoms** until there is a medical problem like a heart attack or stroke. How high your blood pressure is depends on:

1. How hard and fast the heart has to squeeze to get the blood out of the heart,
2. The size and stiffness of the blood vessels.

## Blood Pressure Medications

Blood pressure medications work to improve one of these things. You may have to try different medications to see which one works best for you.

Once you have high blood pressure you will be put on medications to lower your blood pressure. You need to keep taking some kind of a blood pressure medication for the rest of your life.

## Some Types of Blood Pressure Medication

These are some of the different kinds of blood pressure medications. Ask your doctor which kind of medication you're taking. Here is what you need to know about each kind of medication.

### DIURETICS

This is usually the first drug that doctors give their patients. Diuretics work by taking salt and water from the body. This makes it easier for the heart to squeeze blood through the blood vessels. These medications have been around for a long time and are cheap. Be sure to ask your doctor if you need potassium along with these drugs.

- Make sure to take these medicines in the morning so you don't have to get up to go to the bathroom during the night.

### ADRENERGIC BLOCKERS

One type of these medications blocks the hormones that cause your heart to speed up.

Another type of adrenergic blockers keeps the blood vessels open and that lowers the blood pressure.

Do not stop taking these medications suddenly because there is a risk that your hypertension will go up and your heart will beat too fast.

- If you are on these drugs make sure you stand up slowly so you don't get dizzy or pass out. It's a good idea to take your first dose at bedtime.

## CALCIUM CHANNEL BLOCKERS

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One type of calcium channel blockers causes the blood vessels to increase in size, but doesn't cause the heart to slow down.

Another type of calcium channel blockers causes the heart to slow down and lowers the amount of blood that is squeezed from the heart.

- Make sure you let your doctor know if you are dizzy or have an irregular heart rate.
- If you are on these medications don't drink grapefruit juice because it keeps the medication from being used.

## ACE AND ARBS

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There is a complicated connection between your body's organs that raise or lower your blood pressure. These medications stop that connection and keep the blood pressure low.

- ACE drugs may cause a dry cough. If you get a cough after starting an ACE tell your doctor.

## VASCULAR DILATORS

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These medications relax the artery walls so the heart doesn't have to squeeze so hard to get the blood out.

## CENTRAL ADRENERGIC AGONISTS

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These medications lower how fast the heart beats and how hard it squeezes and they relax the blood vessels.

Stand up slowly so you won't get dizzy.

Don't just suddenly stop taking these drugs. You need to stop taking them slowly over time, so your blood pressure doesn't go up too high too fast.

For more information visit [www.hearhighway.org](http://www.hearhighway.org) or call Check Your Health, 1-888-222-2542.



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